

Bhai Vir Singh Issue

# The Sikh Sansar

USA — CANADA



QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE SIKH FOUNDATION

Vol. 1  
No. 2



THE SIKH FOUNDATION  
USA



JUNE 1972



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THE SIKH SANSAR: Sansar means universe. Traditionally the material universe was considered an "illusion" (Maya). The Sikhs consider the material universe as a manifestation of cosmic spirit. This journal will present the material and spiritual aspects of Sikh life.

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## Editorial

THE SIKH SANSAR  
Volume 1, Number 2  
June 1972

The year was 1948 and the green valley of Dehra Dun was filled with the beauty of autumn. The rivulets, the trees and the flowers were scintillating under the blue sky and yonder lay the studded city of Mussoorie with the snow-clad Himalayas in the background. The young man was cycling down the hill with enthusiasm, trying to brace himself for the task ahead.

The young man was President of the Sikh Students Literary Society and was aspiring to obtain an article for publication in the journal *Deepak* from the great Punjabi author and poet Bhai Vir Singh. It took him almost two weeks to establish contact and arrange for the memorable meeting. Approaching the house, he rings the doorbell and is ushered into the waiting room by a young lady. Waiting for ten minutes, which for him seemed like hours, apprehensions set in and all the articulate statements and questions he had composed seemed to have faded away. The young man was overcome when Bhai Vir Singh walked in.

A radiant personality with that magnificent white beard and bright eyes, dignified by sophisticated simplicity and gentle mannerisms, the noble hand touched the shoulder of the young man. His apprehensions disappeared and tranquillity reigned.

Two weeks later the young man returned, only this time apprehensions were replaced by a yearning to be in the company of this great human being. A friendship developed and the article was contributed in Punjabi and published both in Punjabi and English. "Youth of the Khalsa, Arouse Yourselves" was the title, and the basic message of the article to the Sikh youth was conveyed as follows:

"There is a schism in the *Panth*. There is despondency, but do not be downhearted—you or any other Sikh. You are a torch of the Guru. Give light therefore by your example and fill the nation with the loving service of your strength, heroism and sacrifice. After every adversity the Sikhs have arisen again in ones and twos, till the ones equal a multitude.

Yes, friends, in those days too it was the youth who first took the field. Let cruelty not despond you, but let it fill you with the ennobling rage of truth and sacrifice; in the fire of which transfigured youth shall arise giving of their service joyously. 'Thy will be done' irradiating them; living their lives 'for the good of all.' May God assist you!"

An eminent philosopher, poet, author and mystic, Bhai Vir Singh was born on December 5, 1872, at Amritsar in the family of Dr. Charan Singh, an eminent poet and a scholar himself. Bhai Sahib followed a distinguished ancestral heritage of scholarly authors and poets which goes back to Maharaja Kaura Mal, once the Governor of *Multan*.

"This silent poet made the rivers cry and set the hills on fire by a touch of his emotion. He remained behind the scenes, invisible, with the flute ringing in the loneliness of a dark midnight," says Professor Puran Singh.

"His devoted love for humanity expressed itself in his books; in the establishment of the *Khalsa Tract Society*, in the starting of the *Wazir-e-Hind Press*—the first printing press in Amritsar; in the dissemination of information through the *Khalsa Samachar*, a weekly paper; in the organization of the *Chief Khalsa Dewan*; in the reorganization of the *Khalsa College*; in the starting of an orphanage at Amritsar; by the organization of the Sikh Educational Committee for the propagation of education in Punjab; through his initiative in 1920 in creating the movement for the uplift of the so-called 'untouchables'; by the starting of a Blind Asylum at Amritsar and the establishment and founding of the free Homeopathic Hospital at Amritsar; through the profuse literary and religious works written by him throughout his life.

"Recognition by a grateful people came in the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Oriental Learning. *Honoris Causa* by the University of East Punjab; recognition and honour came in the conferring of the '*Padma Bhushan*'; by



his nomination to the Punjab Legislative Council and his nomination to the National Academy of Letters; it came in the selection of his books as the best books of the year for many years.”\*

In 1957 Bhai Vir Singh passed away. In 1972 that young man—not as young anymore—has the privilege of writing this editorial while the subtle pain of memory lingers in the original words of Bhai Sahib.

## ਯਾਦ

‘ਯਾਦ ਸੱਜਨ ਦੀ’ ਹਰਦਮ ਰਹਿੰਦੀ  
ਲਹਿ ਗਈ ਭੁੰਘੇ ਬਾਈ,  
ਵਾਂਗ ਮੰਗੀਤ ਲਹਿਰਦੀ ਅੰਦਰ  
ਬਣ ਗਈ ਰਾਗ ਇਲਾਹੀ ।  
ਦਾਰੂ ਵਾਂਗ ਸਰੂਰ ਚਾੜ੍ਹਦੀ,  
ਤਰਬ ਵਾਂਗ ਬਰਾਵੇ ;  
ਖਿੱਚੇ ਤੇ ਰਸਭਿੰਨੀ ਕਸਕੇ —  
ਲੱਗੇ ਫਿਰ ਸੁਖਦਾਈ ॥

*From The Kikar Tree—*

Out of the dust with a heavenward thrust  
I rise and rise and turn my eyes  
Thirstily to the Lord of the skies;  
My blossoms opened, my boughs unfurled;  
Nor village, nor city, nor palace nor hut  
do I need in this world  
from which I silently stand aloof:  
In rain and in storm and in hail,  
Through lightning flash and tempest gale  
I never have asked for a roof!  
I love to look at the Lord of the skies  
With my thirsty eyes!  
All that I need is a tiny plot  
To root and fruit and blossom and die,  
Fulfilling my single silent lot  
Under the sky.

BHAI VIR SINGH  
(English rendering by  
Harindranath Chattopadhyaya)

“My soul has caught fire  
in the search for  
that unknown fountain of life.”

*Bhai Vir Singh*

*From THE MYSTIC*

*(written for and dedicated to Bhai Vir Singh)*

He sits at the core of truth, his lucent eye  
Erasing all of ugliness and pain,  
Beholding naught but love in sea and sky,  
In fields that ripple praise through golden grain.

His mind has banqueted on Holy Writ—  
The Word by which the seeker is made whole.  
His food and drink is beauty, exquisite,  
That nourishes song-blossoms of the soul.

RUBY ALTIZER ROBERTS  
Poet Laureate  
Christianburg, Virginia U.S.A.

\*Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, 1971.



**Bhai Vir Singh**  
(1872–1957)

# Tributes

Dr. Vir Singh is truly a great man and a great poet. His is the true humility of spirit, the only real way of losing the ego and finding oneness with the creator.

**RUBY A. ROBERTS**  
Poet Laureate, Virginia, USA

In the plains of the famous Five Rivers so closely connected with earliest Indian history, the old conception of the Rishis—of those great Vedic Sages—has come to life again in the person of Bhai Vir Singh who is being appreciated by his own people as well as by the whole world as a great poet, as a saint and as a great man.

**PROFESSOR HERBERT W. DUDA, Ph.D.**  
Director of the Oriental Institute, Vienna

In our European life the poet has mostly lost the intense feeling of responsibility due to his fellow-men and the world around. He withdrew into the *turris eburnea*. In your country, a poet like Bhai Vir Singh seems to be truly a leader of the people, a "Poet-Saint," an epithet which in Europe cannot be attributed to anybody since Dante Aleghieri.

**FRANZ THEODOR CSOKOR**  
President, Österreichischer P.E.N. Club, Austria

"There is deep spirituality, a vital feeling for human brotherhood and a humility that only the really great possess."

**MIRIAM CLARK POTTER**  
California, USA

It is a privilege to have an opportunity to pay tribute to this great interpreter of the Punjab, and of aspirations shared by all mankind.

**PROF. G. MORGENSTIERNE**  
Indisk Institute, Oslo, Norway

ਆਪ ਜੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਮਿਹਰਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਨਦਰਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਤੱਖ ਹਨ। ਮੇਰੇ ਵਿਚ ਜੋ ਕੁਛ ਹੈ ਨਿਰੋਲ ਆਪ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਬਖਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਹੈ। ਮੇਰੇ ਵਿਚ ਕੋਈ ਗੁਣ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ, ਮੈਂ ਨਿਰਗੁਣ ਨਿਮਾਣੇ ਤੇ ਆਪ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਅਧਾਰ ਰਹਿਮਤ ਹੈ। ਸ਼ੁਕਰ ਹੈ, ਸ਼ੁਕਰ ਹੈ।

ਤਾਦੀ ਸੁਧ ਸਿੰਘ

Bhai Vir Singh's poems are not read only with the eyes ; to feel them and understand them, the soul must use the eyes.

**CLAUDIO DE SOUZA**  
President, P.E.N. Club, Brazil

Bhai Vir Singh's poetry is the source of moral and spiritual enrichment, of a truly sacred emotion. The cosmic vision of the poet which can sometimes be compared to that of Shelley's, awakes in one a thirst for the Eternal and the *Indicible* and the beauties of the world to which the song gives life are based on the Providence of Creation. Never has the communion of aspirations of the East and West of our Indo-European family, been more deeply felt than in the magnificent works : *The search of Jamuna and the Birth of Ganga*.

**CHARLES DEDEYAN**  
Professor of Comparative Literature, Sorbonne, Paris

Bhai Vir Singh leads us back to the pool in which we might all find refreshment, if we will.

**CHRISTINE WESTON**  
Maine, USA

Bhai Vir Singh is a voice of the New Renaissance in India. He is a silent man : in his silence are wonder and worship. He is a man of action: in his action is a song and as he sings, he opens our hearts and we see the world is God-filled. *Isha Vasyam Sarvam Idam* "All that is filled with the Divine Spirit".

**SADHU T.L. VASWANI**  
Poona

Verily, when the devotee is illumined with the light of Guru's Grace, and the Divine *Nam* takes possession of his heart, he is free from the net of the world and rises to the highest spiritual eminence. To this status Bhai Vir Singh Ji has reached, and in the fullness of his spiritual experience, he guides those who are struggling on the path for the one sole acquisition of human life, namely the realisation of God.

**SWAMI RAMDAS**  
Anandashram S. India

Oh, that the Punjab could produce many more men of his type.

**MAN MOHAN**  
Punjab

ਮਿਰੀ ਛਿਪੀ ਰਹੇ ਗੁਲਜ਼ਾਰ, ਮੈਂ ਨੀਵਾਂ ਉੱਗਿਆ ;  
 ਕੁਈ ਲਗੇ ਨ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਟਪਾਰ, ਮੈਂ ਪਰਬਤ ਲੁੱਕਿਆ ।  
 ਮੈਂ ਲਿਆ ਅਕਾਸ਼ੋਂ ਰੰਗ, ਜੁ ਸ਼ੋਖ ਨ ਵੰਨ ਦਾ ;  
 ਹਾਂ, ਧੁਰੋਂ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਮੰਗ, ਮੈਂ ਆਯਾ ਜਗਤ ਤੇ ।  
 ਮੈਂ ਪੀਆਂ ਅਰਸ ਦੀ ਤੋਲ, ਪਲਾਂ ਮੈਂ ਕਿਰਨ ਖਾ ;  
 ਮੇਰੀ ਨਾਲ ਚਾਂਦਨੀ ਖੇਲ, ਰਾਤਿ ਰਲ ਖੇਲੀਏ ।  
 ਮੈਂ ਮਸਤ ਆਪਣੇ ਹਾਲ, ਮਗਨ ਗੰਧਿ ਆਪਣੀ ;  
 ਹਾਂ ਦਿਨ ਨੂੰ ਭੋਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਭਿ ਮਿਲਨੋਂ ਸੰਗਦਾ ।  
 ਆ ਸ਼ੋਖੀ ਕਰਕੇ ਪੌਣ ਜਦੋਂ ਗਲ ਲੱਗਦੀ ,  
 ਮੈਂ ਨਾਂਹਿ ਹਿਲਾਵਾਂ ਧਉਣ ਵਾਜ ਨਾ ਕੱਢਦਾ ।  
 ਹੋ, ਫਿਰ ਬੀ ਟੁੱਟਾਂ, ਹਾਇ ! ਵਿਛੋੜਨ ਵਾਲਿਓ !  
 ਮਿਰੀ ਭਿੰਨੀ ਇਹ ਖੁਸ਼ਬੋਇ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਨਾ ਛਿੱਪਦੀ ।  
 ਮਿਰੀ ਛਿਪੇ ਰਹਿਣ ਦੀ ਚਾਹ ਤੇ ਛਿਪ ਟੁਰ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ; .  
 ਹਾ, ਪੂਰੀ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਨਾਂਹ, ਮੈਂ ਤਰਲੇ ਲੈ ਰਿਹਾ ।

## SOLITUDE

*Adapted from the original poem of Bhai Vir Singh, above, by  
 SATINDER KAUR KAPANY*

Still and silent in my bough  
 I do not aspire to grow  
 That no eyes should see me  
 I withdraw amidst tall grass  
 O infinite sky, O pulsating ball  
 yellow throbbing before my vision  
 To the world I came to seek poverty  
 I thirst for the heavenly dew!  
 the sun has dipped below the horizon  
 O splendrous moon, magnificent in your glory  
 come dance and play with me  
 O you ruthless wind, why do you torment me  
 in the stillness of the night  
  
 I am silent and despondent  
 My mild fragrance knows not how to hide  
 O solitude solitude my wish is not fulfilled—

**BHAI VIR SINGH'S POETRY**  
**DR. GOBIND SINGH MANSUKHANI, M.A., LL.B., Ph.D.\***

By sheer genius and vision, he has been able to build a silver bridge from the ephemeral to the eternal, from the corporal to the metaphysical, from the earth to heaven. Yet in spite of his lofty thought and spiritual passion, he keeps his feet on the ground and reminds us of the temptations and opportunities of human life.

*He spoke of poetry, and how  
Divine it was—a light, a love—  
A spirit which like wind doth blow  
As it listeth, to and fro  
A dew rained down from God above;  
A power which comes and goes like dream,  
And which none can ever trace—  
Heaven's light on earth—Truth's brightest beam.*

— Shelley

Poetry has been divided under two categories—poetry of the earth, and poetry of heaven. The former deals with temporal and topical problems, the challenges faced by ordinary men and women, while the latter deals with permanent and fundamental problems, particularly those of spiritual values. Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957), the representative poet of the Panjab in the present century, combines both these elements, but he is at his best when he deals with things of the spirit. He is very sensitive to the hardships and sufferings of his countrymen and yet he rises above the crisis of the present and flies into the empyrean to have a glimpse of the holy and the mystical. As we go through his poems, we not only feel the spring and autumn breeze but also the spiritual breeze of the ethereal space. By sheer genius and vision, he has been able to build a silver bridge from the ephemeral to the eternal, from the corporal to the metaphysical, from the earth to heaven. Yet in spite of his lofty thought and spiritual passion, he keeps his feet on the ground and reminds us of the temptations and opportunities of human life. He has left his mark in the field of social reform, his imprint on religious and educational institutions which he started and supported.

\*Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani is Development Officer, University Grants Commission, New Delhi. He is well known for his numerous articles and books on Sikh religion. His latest publication is entitled "Guru Nanak – The Apostle of Love." He visited the U.S.A. on a lecture tour in 1970 and is planning another trip this year.

Above all, he stands out as a poet-philosopher in the line of Walt Whitman, Wordsworth and Tagore.

**Poet of Nature**

Bhai Vir Singh is essentially a great exponent of nature. He is alive to its feast of colours and forms. He catches its contours, its light and shade like a painter. Look at the beautiful picture of the moonlight:

*The beams of the moonlight fall on the  
boulders like a pattering rain of needles,  
I saw them falling on the flowing river,  
one by one,  
Slowly, softly, softly, slowly dancing run  
the footfalls of the moonlight, on the  
eddy waves,  
The needles play on the bosom of the crystal  
water,  
The needles glint in the air,  
The myriad feet of the moonlight weave  
rich measures of music on the ground,  
A flood of rapture!<sup>1</sup>*

Writing of the Ichabal stream in Matak Hularay, Vir Singh goes into an ecstasy:

*Ichabal! When thy trumpet strikes my ear,  
My head reels with a divine intoxication.*

The poet sees the hand of God in the symmetry and beauty of nature. When the gardener tells the poet that the chrysanthemum has bloomed in the flowerpot:

*But it came from the roots; how did it get  
these colourful petals?*

The poet himself gives an answer to this question:

*Just as the light of the sun is reflected in  
the mirror  
In the same way, the beauty of heaven shines  
in the forms of nature.*

The poet's intimacy with nature makes him feel even its short absence. In summer the poet sleeps

under the open sky, in the company of the stars and the moon. In winter's cold, when he must keep indoors, he feels he cannot sleep without them.

Apart from the beauty and fascination of nature, Vir Singh feels that there is a close kinship between nature and man. In *Rana Surat Singh*, the poet expresses the sympathy of rain with the misfortunes of the lady:

*The Mother cries that Radha is weeping,  
The clouds weep, whole nature weeps.  
All share the sorrow with me.*

But above everything else is the poet's realisation of the divine presence in the objects of nature. Like Wordsworth, Vir Singh actually feels the presence of God in nature. He sees the body of the formless in the myriad forms around. This is not merely a poetic mood; it is the intense realisation of God's presence in objects around:

*In it all God's face;  
The night is wet with His love,  
His grace fills all space.<sup>2</sup>*

The divine splendour pours down in the wondrous showers of the starry light. The love of the stars is in reality his love of God:

*My friendship with the stars is old;  
At midnight down they come to me,  
Sliding down the strings of rays,  
And they enter into my soul with all the  
wealth of heaven,  
Every night they fill my life with God.<sup>3</sup>*

This vision of divinity in the sun, the stars and the moon confirms his belief in the Lord of Wonder—Wahguru:

*The stars tell me—He is:  
Wave and wave of Wonder breaks;  
Silence still more silent grows.  
Light and ambrosia patter on my roof,  
I feel someone unseen gathering me in  
His arms.<sup>4</sup>*

Of the lessons imparted by nature to man, many have written, but Vir Singh writes with a difference. The river Ganga willingly accepts dirt from the people so that they may be clean:

*The Ganga knows the ways in which heaven  
does good to all,  
The heat of the heat-oppressed she takes to  
herself.*

*She fain would be muddy, if only others may  
be made clean.  
She gives and forgives; she knows how to serve.  
With her coolest waves, if only others may be  
happier thereby.<sup>5</sup>*

Man's selfishness makes him pluck the rose from the stem, thereby destroying its life:

*O flower-gatherer! Why dost thou take me  
away, to have me all for thyself, thine only,  
denied to all others!  
Ah! it will be so, it will be so—thou will have  
me all for thyself.  
But thou will retain me for less than a twin-  
kling of an eye.  
And I, my perfume, my beauty, my soul, and  
all I am will die.<sup>6</sup>*

Vir Singh finds moral lessons in the simple objects of nature. The Kikar tree—a common tree in the Panjab (*Acacia arabica*) used as fuel—is a symbol of the spiritual seeker who must be ready to face the hard blows of the axe from the very people he seeks to serve:

*I grow upward, my march is heavenward,  
My face is turned to the God of the skies . . .  
I live on air, I desire naught,  
I am all alone in myself, the ascetic of  
centuries . . .  
And yet for me, O world, thou hast but  
an axe!<sup>7</sup>*

Every true leader, every great reformer is like the Kikar tree. He must pay the price of tears and blood for the redemption of society. He must take it as a part of the divine plan.

### Poet of Freedom

Vir Singh was essentially a great patriot. Having known the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh in his own town, he inspired the people with a passion for freedom. In *Ganga Ram*, he expresses his intense love of freedom:

*Never shall I be a servant,  
Never lose my freedom,  
Freedom is my birthright  
This is the divine gift,  
The gracious Lord may ever foster,  
My precious spirit of freedom.*

Through the story of the nightingale imprisoned in a cage by the gardener, he has given expression to his patriotic fervour:



*Who knows the state of an imprisoned soul  
whose freedom is in the will of another?  
Better death than loss of the freedom of living.  
If freedom depart from the soul, it is better  
that life should cease forever.<sup>8</sup>*

Vir Singh had the true spirit of the Khalsa. His pen was his sword; he knew that India was bound to be free. He wrote:

*Let death come, it is welcome,  
Let freedom stay, let life depart,  
Fight for freedom, do or die,  
The tradition of heroes is ever-lasting.*

Fortunately, he lived for ten years after India won her freedom from British rule.

### Devotional Poetry

Vir Singh's lines are full of love and devotion for the Gurus. In his poem *The Sun Wearer* he pays his homage to Guru Gobind Singh:

*Come and meet me, O wearer of the plume  
in thy turban,  
I have taken off my mind from this world,  
And have placed it on thy lotus feet,  
To remember thee is the vocation of my life.  
Come now and meet me, O wearer of the  
plume in thy turban.*

Vir Singh describes the spiritual experiences of a true Sikh—how by constant repetition of the God's Name, the Name gets within the subconscious mind and how its undercurrent continues while one does one's daily routine duties. Through meditation it infiltrates from the subconscious mind to the plane of the subtle soul where it gives joy and peace. This is a matter to be experienced and not discussed.<sup>14</sup> As we read his poems, we feel assured of the genuineness of his spiritual experience:

*You met me, my love, in my dream,  
I ran to embrace you, but you were all light,  
My trembling arms could not catch you.*

### Philosophy of Life

Great poetry is a compound of emotion and reflection. It is in reflection, in the philosophy born out of personal experience, that the poet has significance for the world. Dr. Radhakrishnan writes in this connection, "The poet's mind dominated by an overpowering sense of the spiritual,

penetrates through the veil of their earthly covering into the life of things."<sup>15</sup> While the poet's words please the ear, his ideas sink into the heart.

Vir Singh's philosophy is summed up in his poem entitled *What Is Life?* He defines life in terms of nature—a blossom. The object of the individual is to blossom like a flower, to spread fragrance and joy. The bounties of nature come from a spiritual spring. He who keeps his soul in tune with the Infinite is like the lotus flower which has its roots in water, but looks up to heaven. Elsewhere, the poet regards the world as a play of God. We are all in His hands:

*I play on the lotus-leaf today;  
Tomorrow I shall be with Him!  
He drops me, and he draws me up—  
A dew-drop on the lotus-leaf.<sup>16</sup>*

Nothing is permanent; change is the law of life. The spring blossoms are followed by the autumnal yellow leaves, and so the dance of the seasons follows one another in cyclic order. Yet man must remain steadfast in his aim and pursue his goal with perseverance and self-control:

*They say man is the crest of the wave of life;  
But what is man, since he has forgotten his  
soul.  
Ah! He has become a wilted flower,  
For he is the Lord of Creation only,  
If he is the Lord of himself.<sup>17</sup>*

In his epic poem *Rana Surat Singh* the poet, while relating the story of the unfortunate queen who lost her husband and could not stand separation, suggests that love can be sublimated and then it can bring peace and joy.

The main concern of man's life is the fulfillment of the soul—the merging of the individual soul with the universal soul. This can be done by attuning the soul to the inner reality through love of nature and service of God's creation.

### Poet of Divine Inspiration

Great poetry gives us a vision of the heart of life and of the universal spirit which pervades the world. Vir Singh is in search of the spirit of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. But bookish knowledge cannot lead to the door of Truth. The crumbs of the bread of learning gathered from door to door or from heaps of books cannot give real wisdom. In his poem *My Mind a Beggar's Bowl* he reveals the total futility of bookish learning:



One day I went to my saint.  
I placed my bowl (of learning) before him,  
And I gave it as offering;  
"Dirt, dirt," he cried and turned it upside  
down.  
He threw the crumbs away,  
He rubbed it with sand, he washed it with  
water, clean of all the dirt of learning.<sup>9</sup>

How then can one make spiritual progress? The poet reiterates the scriptural wisdom, "Know thyself." In *Love and Wisdom*, Vir Singh writes:

*If it be thy longing to be with thy rose forever,  
Turn within, within, turn within thine own  
self, thy love-thirsty glance!  
In vain is thy search for the rose in this visible  
world of change.  
The eternal spring is theirs who have entered  
in and seen him within their soul.*<sup>10</sup>

Through introspection and intense longing, the poet pursues his quest of Divinity:

*My longing for him will never end.  
Enough for me, this vocation of pain.  
I revel in this killing thirst,  
The misery of this hunger is my life and joy  
forever.*<sup>11</sup>

The hurdle between man and God is the ego which can be overcome by following the instruction of the spiritual preceptor.

Ultimately, the poet has a vision of the Infinite and he describes his experience in these words:

*It is a subtle feeling.  
An unbalanced and balanced joy . . .  
The heart is full of glory,  
And the life full of peace.  
Within that golden land, there is neither right  
nor wrong;  
And might is frail and love is strong.*<sup>12</sup>

The poet cannot adequately express the supreme state of bliss:

*I am drowned in oceans of joy,  
I am dumb with song.  
I say nothing, I know nothing.*<sup>13</sup>

### Poetic Technique

Sublimity and grand style go hand in hand in great poetry. Vir Singh is not only rich in the substance of thought and feeling, but also knowledgeable in the subtleties of poetic technique. Epic, lyric, Rubai—he attempted with equal success. His verses flow like the sweep of a mighty river, eloquent and majestic. He writes spontaneously because he is guided by an inner impulse. The poem is shaped not by the mould of an exterior kind; it is transformed in the alembic of his vision. His poetry possesses the spontaneity of Wordsworth, the melody of Tagore, the piety of Milton and the mysticism of Yeats. The celestial music, the resonant cadence, the felicity of phrase, the apt figure of speech, unmistakably indicate the divine inspiration and the moral fervour which lay within the poet's soul. He is remembered today in spite of his desire that he should be forgotten like the violet flower:

*How I wish to conceal my fragrance,  
To end the journey all alone;  
Alas! my wish remains unfulfilled.*

His versatility, his sublimity and his divine madness ensure him a secure niche in the mansion of Indian poetry.

<sup>1</sup> Vir Singh, *Nargas* (translated into English by Puran Singh), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> Vir Singh, *Guru Nanak Chamatkar*, p. 293.

<sup>15</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Tagore*, p. 90.

<sup>16</sup> Vir Singh, *Nargas*, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

१६

**The next issue** of the SIKH SANSAR (September 1972) will feature

### **SIKHS IN U.S.A. AND CANADA**

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the SIKH SANSAR plans to feature special subjects such as

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3. SIKH ART
4. SIKH CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

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### **In the previous issue**

*The Inaugural Issue, March 1972 of the Sikh Sansar consisted of:*

#### **Editorial**

Selections from Gurbani . . . . .	Kabir
Message . . . . .	Sikh Review
Message . . . . .	Sikh Courier
Message . . . . .	H. S. Malik
Message of the Sikh Spirit to the World Today . . . . .	H. S. Malik
A Renaissance of Sikh Literature . . . . .	C. H. Loehlin
Message . . . . .	His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala
Padma Bhushan Award . . . . .	
Problems of Punjabi Language and Literature . . . . .	M. S. Randhawa
Message . . . . .	K. S. Narang
Essence of Guru Nanak's Teachings . . . . .	K. S. Narang
International Punjabi Society – A Report . . . . .	
Local News . . . . .	G. S. Sidhu
Letters to the Editor . . . . .	
Book Review . . . . .	R. K. Janmeja Singh
About the Sikh Foundation . . . . .	N. S. Kapany
Instructions to Authors	

**BHAI VIR SINGH—THE POET OF ETERNITY**  
**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GOPAL SINGH\***

But Vir Singh will perhaps live more as a poet, for it is in his verse that his appeal is more universal and secular, even though couched in mystic metaphor. He took Punjabi poetry out of the rut of *kissas* (romances) and stereotyped mystic vocabulary and transferred it into a magic world that is at once modern (for it responds to the needs of the age in the language of the aesthete) and yet clings to the tradition that is India's with the intuitive grasp of a seer.

It is said that when Dr. Charan Singh, the erudite father of Bhai Vir Singh, learned that his eighteen-year-old son, who had matriculated just then, wrote verses in Punjabi, "the language of the illiterate rustic," he was shocked. He complained about it to one of the top-ranking Sikh scholars of *Braj Bhasha*, Baba Sumer Singh of Patna, and implored him to persuade young Vir Singh to cultivate *Braj*, then the only language of literary speech among the learned, whether Hindu or Sikh. When asked why he indulged in this "impertinence," Vir Singh replied, "I've read somewhere in Saadi that men with a heart buy up their wares from a shop that is least frequented by others; hence my choice of Punjabi." The scholar was silenced, though not answered. When, however, Vir Singh read out some of his verses to the old savant, he was converted so much so that after that he himself never wrote in *Braj*, and followed by the father of the poet, took to writing in Punjabi.

**A Pioneer**

Thus, Vir Singh chiselled out for himself like a pioneer a path that was at once treacherous and lonely. There was no one among the literate people, not even the Sikhs, to read or laud him. Ex-

cept for one brief century, the sixteenth, the Sikhs had never cultivated Punjabi seriously. The earliest work in chaste Punjabi extant today is not by Guru Nanak (1469-1538), but by a Muslim Sufi, Baba Farid, Ganj-i-Shakar, of the twelfth century. After the compilation of the *Adi Granth* in 1604, all association of the Sikhs with Punjabi came to a sudden end, and it was the Muslim sufis, or romantics, like Shah Hussain, Bulleh Shah, Warris and Hasham, or Hindu divines like Vali Ram, Hirdey Ram, Sahj Ram, or others like Damodar who employed Punjabi for secular as well as spiritual writings. The Sikh Gurus even did not use Punjabi exclusively; for they wrote both in a mixed language called Hindwi and variants of Punjabi then known and practised. When, therefore, Vir Singh plumped for Punjabi, he had no earthly reason for so doing. The language of the court was Urdu, the medium of instruction English, the reading of the erudite Persian or *Braj*. But being made of a sterner, or shall we say sensitive, stuff that remained immune throughout life to worldly repute or riches (even though he was literally worshipped later in life and lived in the best of aristocratic style), he made his choice of a half-developed literary medium that in his hands was to acquire the dignity and maturity of a modern language.

The rest was now easy. Vir Singh started with historical romances, like *Sundri*, *Bijaya Singh*, *Satwant Kaur*, etc., which revealed the inner core of Sikh struggle against the Moghals and laid bare the high idealism that animated it. To crown all came *Baba Naudh Singh*, the story of a devout greybeard through whom Sikhism is revealed at its social and spiritual best, and which, in fact, may have been the portrayal of the author's own character. Nowhere, however, is the writer sectarian; his characters betray no animus against

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\*His Excellency Dr. Gopal Singh, India's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Bulgaria, was a former member of Indian Parliament, to which he was nominated as a most distinguished man of letters. His first-ever English translation of the Sikh Scripture, "Guru Granth Sahib," has opened up new vistas of spiritual inquiry and fulfillment. His other works include the biographies of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, published in fourteen languages by the National Book Trust of India, "The Religion of the Sikhs," published by Asia Publishing House, and "A History of the Sikh People," currently being published in two volumes by Macmillans.

their adversaries and fight them on clean, ethical grounds. In old Naudh Singh throbs a Sikh heart that is at once worldly and other worldly, individual yet universal. Vir Singh followed them up by biographies of the Sikh Gurus, translations from classics, dictionaries and pamphlets. His prose in each one of these writings is so chaste, well groomed and rhythmical, and in diction and metaphor so fresh that one is enthralled by its mere lilt, its inevitability, its sweet delicacy and tenderness.

### Mystic Metaphor

But Vir Singh will perhaps live more as a poet, for it is in his verse that his appeal is more universal and secular, even though couched in mystic metaphor. He took Punjabi poetry out of the rut of *kissas* (romances) and stereotyped mystic vocabulary and transformed it into a magic world that is at once modern (for it responds to the needs of the age in the language of the aesthete) and yet clings to the tradition that is India's with the intuitive grasp of a seer. His *Rana Surat Singh*, a narrative of 14,000 lines in blank verse, is an achievement of high distinction, depicting the search of restless soul, torn from its ideal, for an abode of eternal bliss. She finds her moorings in the end neither in renunciation nor forced con-

templation, but in *Karma Yoga*, the detached attachment to the field of earthly activity.

This message runs through the entire muse of Vir Singh, especially in his little gems of *Rubayats*, of which he has given us three volumes—*Lebran De Har*, *Matak Hulare* and *Bijlian De Har*. In this verse form which Vir Singh is the first to popularise in Punjabi, studded with classical vocabulary and modern metaphor, is enshrined the message of hope and optimism that the end of life is not negation, but its fulfillment. To be worthy of life, the least we have to attempt is to live. And to live is to live in joy, in harmony or what the sages have called *Sad-Anand*. How is this state of bliss to be achieved in a world of flux where all that we see changes, withers, dies? By dedicating our souls to the woes of the earth, yet being in bloom by striking our roots in the mother Earth or the life of all life, which is God.

*I washed the charcoal with milk and curd  
and soap  
In the hope  
That it would its colour change, but no;  
It didn't. Separated, its black remained but  
black entire.  
Then I put it on fire, and it burnt like fire.*

In a fairly long poem, *What Is Life*, the poet questions through a young woman, tormented

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Quarterly—Established 1960

(IN ENGLISH)

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by questions of here and hereafter, a lotus flower that has not yet opened out and remains entombed in a bud, as to the purport and meaning of life. Again and again she comes to it, as the young bud grows and transforms itself into newer manifestations. But she remains unanswered, till one calm morning of cool breeze and liquid gold, the buds burst into open flowers, and the questioning soul takes on their mood of "sat-chit-anand" (Truth, Beauty, Joy). "Here is life," she muses, "to burst out of our shells into a song of joy; to live in beauty and to share it with others is to live in harmony, and one who lives so, lives in eternity." The harmony and peace that the poet seeks is thus not one of a recluse, but the dynamic peace of flowers, of springs and rivers, of fire that flows and glows and grows and distributes and serves. The composure and integration comes through our attachment to the life-force that gives us a name and a habitation.

*Why were you felled and burnt, O orange tree?  
Sire, I lost my sap, and ceased to be.*

#### Mood of Ecstasy

His creepers, therefore, utter a sign of distress when torn from their prop; his flowers hate to be crushed into scent; his soul torn from its silence. He gives expression to this mood in a poem,

*Binafsha Da Phul* (violet flower), where the sheer joy of being alive leads the poet into a mood of ecstasy; and he seeks the tender compassion of the world to let him alone.

*Let my blossoms live in solitude,  
Sheltered by the mountain's ledge.  
Let no evil eye feast its lust on me,  
I live on the world's edge. . . .  
My hues are soft, low-toned,  
I wave tenderly like a reed;  
I seek to nourish poverty  
In the world of greed. . . .  
I feed myself on heaven's dews,  
With sun is filled my life's bowl,  
At night the moonlight sweetens the fragrance  
of my soul.  
When winds, in their pitiless fury, bug me  
break my bones,  
I lie low in their highways, and make no  
moans. . . .  
I seek to live in solitude,  
And wither and cease. . . .  
But the eyes of the scent-crusher seek me,  
And break my peace. . . ."*

Vir Singh said of the orange tree that he died because he was dead. Can we say that of Vir Singh too? For he lives with us through eternity of which he was a part and of which he sang so majestically.

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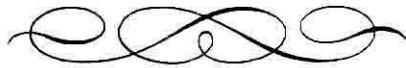
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## Introduction to International Punjabi Society

Sardar Meharban Singh Dhupia who is a unifying force in many fields, after his several visits abroad thought of creating an organization which could function as a living organism of the Punjabis scattered in various parts of the world. His ideas found a ready response in me. During my experience I had seen that the adversities suffered by them during the period of partition and otherwise had inspired the Punjabis in their new places to adapt themselves to the surroundings and to work hard in order to establish themselves once again. In foreign countries they had earned the reputation for hard work and adjustment.

A vigor runs in the Punjabi blood. Whatever be the religion, caste or creed the Punjabi culture is the basic unifying force. It was decided, therefore, to have the INTERNATIONAL PUNJABI SOCIETY. The very concept was to have a modern outlook and to base the organization so as to fit in the widening horizons.

As a unifying forum the Society has established cultural centers abroad. These centers were intended to function in such a way that the Punjabis living in different places could join together to work for mutual welfare. Punjabi

folklore and culture and literature although having high tradition are running forward in ever expanding dimensions. Cultural activities divorced from all political mindedness could create real unity of minds. This organization which has now a center in the United Kingdom and the United States of America is not only limited to those countries. It has its centers in Canada and Thailand as well. It is going to have its organizational centers in Germany and other different countries of the world. This organization offers love and amity and hopes to receive the same in response. It is hoped that the Punjabis in this country and abroad functioning through the various centers of this organization through cultural activities will always maintain a harmonious atmosphere and keep Punjabis together. This organization with open doors welcomes all Punjabis. It has its portals open to non-Punjabis also who love Punjabi culture and who would like to be associated with it.

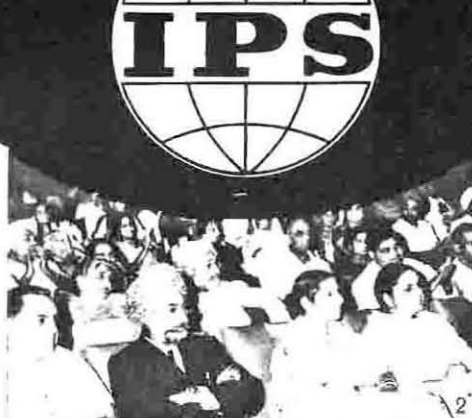
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Musafi  
President

INTERNATIONAL PUNJABI SOCIETY





# International Punjabi Society PRESENTS **A ROUND-UP**



1 Shri G.S. Pathak, Vice President of India, extreme left with Sardar Hukam Singh, Governor, Rajasthan and Patron of the Society, arriving to attend the Annual Function of the Society. On the extreme right is Shri Meharban Singh Dhupia, General Secretary of the Society.

2 Hon'ble Justice Prakash Narain and Hon'ble Justice Pritam Singh Safeer with their ladies, watching the cultural programme arranged by the Society.

3 Famous film-star Vyjayantimala who is now married to Dr. Bali, life Member of the Society. Dr. Bali is on her right.

4 Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir, M.P., ex-Chief Minister of Punjab and President of the Society, is seen garlanding Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh, before leaving India as India's Ambassador to Switzerland.

5 Punjabi M.P.s who have been elected for the Lok Sabha this year in India. In the centre is seen Shri G.S. Dhillon, Speaker, Lok Sabha and on his right is Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir, M.P., President of the Society.



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International Punjabi Society is three years old now ! Founded with unprecedented enthusiasm today it provides forums for Punjabis living in and outside India to get together, exchange views and recreate themselves through cultural programmes - the object being to cultivate a feeling of commonness to each other on one hand and to popularise their culture and literature, on the other.

Although still in its infancy, it is looking up to a roaring future when it ties up all the Punjabis throughout the world with a common link.

Its membership includes many well known personalities, writers, film producers, actors, lawyers and businessmen. And it is swelling fast !

## THE AGE OF BHAI VIR SINGH PROFESSOR HARBANS SINGH\*

Through his writings he brought about a transformation in Punjabi letters; through his writings—not poetry alone—he stirred the Sikhs to a new awareness of their tradition and destiny. A spirit of enlightenment thus broke forth among the people emancipating them from the debilitating and superstitious beliefs and practices which had overgrown the simple teaching of the founding Gurus. Bhai Vir Singh awakened and shaped the conscience of this neo-Sikhism. He moulded a whole generation and introduced it to new modes of thought and aspiration. In recovering and reestablishing Sikh identity, his part was crucial.

In the year of his birth centenary, Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) will be characterized and evaluated from a variety of standpoints. Perhaps the commonest, and yet most meaningful, lines of enquiry will be to essay an appraisal of his contributions as a maker of modern Punjabi literature and as a poet of Sikh renaissance. To see him in this dual role is to seize the essence of his genius. Bhai Vir Singh was one man in the Punjab who grasped the vital implications of the prevailing urges and impulses of that period. In his sensitive soul was shaped a subtle and vital response to the challenge of the time. This he verbalized with the full integrity of his intellectual and spiritual resources. Through his writings he brought about a transformation in Punjabi letters; through his writings—not poetry alone—he stirred the Sikhs to a new awareness of their tradition and destiny. A spirit of enlightenment thus broke forth among the people emancipating them from the debilitating and superstitious beliefs and practices which had overgrown the simple teaching of the founding Gurus. Bhai Vir Singh awakened and shaped the conscience of this neo-Sikhism. He moulded a whole generation and introduced it to new modes of thought and aspiration. In recovering and reestablishing Sikh identity, his part was crucial. To understand him and to judge the quality of his work, an acquaintance with the situation he was confronted with will be relevant.

\*Prof. Harbans Singh is head of the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala. He has published numerous articles on Sikh religion and his latest book on Guru Nanak was published on the fifth centennial. Professor Singh was a visiting professor at Harvard University for one year. He is the Editor of "The Journal of Religious Studies" and on the editorial advisory board of the SIKH SANSAR.

At the time of Bhai Vir Singh's birth, the Punjab was in a ferment of new ideas. The social and cultural *milieu* was fast changing. A quarter of a century had gone by since the fall of the Sikh kingdom and its substitution by the British. This was the last major territory in India to become part of the English dominions. With the advent of the British, the barriers broke down and the Punjab came within the orbit of the new consciousness arising in the country as a result of the introduction of Western education. One of the important consequences of the interaction of Western and Indian cultures was the development of indigenous languages and literatures. The stimulus for this came from the work of Christian missionaries, English schools and colleges, and orientalists who studied and discovered the beauty and richness of Indian thought and learning.

Especially important in this context was the contribution of the first major Protestant mission in India established in the Danish town of Serampore, near Calcutta. The East India Company was then averse to missionary activity and had, for the sake of its commercial interests, imposed restrictions on it which remained operative until 1813. The work by the three English pioneers—William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward—had therefore to be started under the Danish flag. With the permission of the local Governor they set up a centre at Serampore in the year 1800. The first task they undertook was the establishment of boarding schools and a printing press. Ward specialized in Hindu religion and literature and Marshman in Chinese. Carey mastered the Indian languages and wrote "grammars of the Bengalee, the Sanscrit, and the Mah-

ratta languages, and was carrying grammars of the Telinga and Punjabi throughout the press."<sup>1</sup> Translations of the Bible came off the mission press in Indian languages such as Sanskrit, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Marwari, Pushtu, Telugu, Marathi and Punjabi. The Punjabi version, in Gurmukhi script, appeared in 1811.<sup>2</sup> This was the first book printed in the language.

In the field of education, initiative came both from Christian missions and the government. Under direction from British Parliament, the East India Company founded schools for the revival and promotion of Sanskrit and Arabic. To this end, the Calcutta Madrasa and Benares Sanskrit College were opened with purely oriental courses of study. The labours of some European scholars further popularized classical learning. Sir William Jones, who founded in 1784 the Asiatic Society of Bengal, translated Sanskrit classics *Hitopdesa* and *Sakuntala* into English. Friedrich Max Muller (1823-1900), Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford, brought out an English edition of the *Rigveda* and sponsored translations of several Eastern works. Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837), professor at the Fort William College, wrote on the Vedas and on Hindu mathematics and philosophy.

Along with this newly awakened interest in Indian literature and philosophy had grown a demand for English education. The most influential advocate was Raja Rammohun Roy, an Indian leader of extraordinary intellectual gifts and foresight. In 1817, he established in Calcutta the Vidyalyaya, or Hindu College, which was the forerunner of the famous Presidency College. The stated purpose of the college was to create a "channel by which real knowledge may be transferred from the European sources to the intellect of Hindusthan." The argument in favour of the trend was finally clinched by Macaulay's minute of 1835 which made the spread of English education and Western sciences the aim of British policy.

The requirements of Christian missionaries dictated a trend in favour of the modern Indian languages. The schools they had started "had vernacular education as their primary object."<sup>3</sup> Public opinion was gradually becoming consolidated in support of the spoken tongues. In 1867 the British Indian Association of the North-Western Provinces, Aligarh, submitted to the Governor-General a memorial pointing out that

the use of English as the exclusive medium of instruction confined the benefits of higher education to a few persons and involved "a double consumption of time in the acquisition of knowledge." The memorial solicited the Government of India "to establish a system of public education of the highest class, in which the arts, sciences and other branches of literature may be taught through the instrumentality of the vernacular . . ."<sup>4</sup> Two of the signatories to the document were Sayyid Ahmad and Raja Jaykishan Dass.

This meeting of East and West had thus created a challenging situation. The Indian response was bipolar. On one hand, there was the urge to look forward, to change and break with what had been; on the other, a tendency to look backwards, to bring forth the best that there ever was and to reconstruct what had become effete and decrepit. Yet a balance was maintained through the Indian civilization's eternal capacity for synthesis and survival. But a period of emancipation and fertilization had indisputably begun. Vital forces of reform and transformation came into play. Age-old attitudes altered, giving birth to new artistic, literary and social ideas. In the protests of some enlightened spirits and under the impact of liberal Western thought and of the new economic developments, several religious, cultural and humanitarian movements arose. The earliest and most potent of these was the one which proceeded from the radicalism of Raja Rammohun Roy. Another which, in prospect, profoundly influenced the course of Indian history was Sir Sayyid's campaign for Muslim education.

With the coming of the British, the Punjab went through the same process and experience. Even when Ranjit Singh, the Sikh sovereign, still reigned in Lahore, a Presbyterian minister John C. Lowrie had arrived from the United States in 1834 to set up a mission at Ludhiana, the north-western British outpost near the Sikh frontier. The factors for the choice of this area as "the best field of labour" were its "numerous and hardy population . . . a better climate than the lower provinces, and . . . a ready access to the lower ranges of the Himalaya mountains in case of the failure of health." An additional reason was the Sikh people, "to whom our attention at first was specially directed . . ."<sup>5</sup> Besides preaching the Gospel, the mission ran an English school and a printing press. The school was made up of



Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian pupils and the studies included English Readers, Geography, Universal History, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Political Economy, Evidences of Christianity, etc. The school was an innovation in this part of the country—a novelty both in its composition and curriculum. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh sovereign of the Punjab, had himself wanted to have an English school established in his capital for the education of the children of his family and other promising young men. He had Lowrie visit Lahore for this purpose. The school might have materialized, but “the missionary principle of teaching the Gospel in connection with literature and science was unacceptable to the Maharaja.”<sup>6</sup> In the vernacular schools started by the mission, Urdu, Persian and Punjabi were the main subjects of study.

The printing press of the Ludhiana Presbyterian Mission was the pioneer in Punjabi publication. It initiated a number of translations of portions of the Bible and of classics like *Pilgrim's Progress*. This was Punjabi prose in its early rudimentary form. More technically, the mission produced a dictionary of the Punjabi language, a grammar and a descriptive geography of the country which were the first books of their kind in the language. Punjabi printing was still unknown in the Sikh territory across the Sutlej.

With the abrogation of Sikh rule in 1849, the mission extended its work to Lahore. Two of its members, C. W. Forman and John Newton, were set apart for this duty and sent to the Punjab capital the same year. English and vernacular schools as well as welfare institutions like hospitals and orphanages followed. C. W. Forman turned out regularly for bazaar preaching. One day he received a challenge to engage in a public oral controversy with a Muslim theologian. He accepted it. Six subjects were fixed for discussion and the issue joined with zeal from both sides. This event (1862) might well have been a precursor to disputations between spokesmen of different faiths which were raging furiously in the Punjab by the time Bhai Vir Singh was a school-going youth.

Amritsar, headquarters of the Sikh religion, became another important seat of Church enterprise. In 1852 T. H. Fitzpatrick and Robert Clark, the first missionaries of the Church of England appointed to the Punjab, arrived in station. In the valedictory instructions given them, they had

been told: “Though the Brahman religion still sways the minds of a large proportion of the population of the Punjab, and the Mohammedan of another, the dominant religion and power for the last century has been the *Sikh religion*, a species of pure theism, formed in the first instance by a dissenting sect from Hinduism. A few hopeful instances lead us to believe that the Sikhs may prove more accessible to scriptural truth than the Hindus and Mohammedans . . .”<sup>7</sup>

The English missionaries were joined by Daud Singh, recorded to be the first Sikh ever to have embraced Christianity. He had been baptized in Cawnpore by the Rev. W. H. Perkins, and was transferred to Amritsar as pastor in 1852. Two mission houses were built in the city by the Deputy Commissioner. Construction of the station church was started. In the wake of the mission came a vernacular school, a high school, a school for girls and a midwifery hospital. The evangelizing work was rewarded with the conversion of men like Shamaun, i.e. Simeon, a Sikh *granthi*, or priest, formerly Kesar Singh of Sultanwind, Imad-ud-Din, a Muslim *maulawi*, and Rullia Ram of a Hindu Khatri family in Amritsar who had attended the mission school and passed the Calcutta entrance examination. Substations of the mission were opened in important towns of the Sikh tract of Majha such as Tarn Taran, Ajnala and Jandiala. The United Presbyterian Mission, which began its work in Sialkot in 1855, met with special success. The conversion of Ditt, “a dark, lame, little man,” of the sweeper class from Marali village, was the forerunner of what has been called “the mass movement.” “In the eleventh year after Ditt’s conversion more than five hundred Chuhars [outcaste scavengers] were received into the Church. By 1900 more than half of these lowly people in Sialkot District had been converted, and by 1915 all but a few hundred members of the caste professed the Christian faith.”<sup>8</sup> Other societies, notably the Cambridge Mission, the Baptist Mission and the Church of Scotland, entered the field and the network soon covered the entire country, including the frontier areas. A catalyst had entered Punjabi life which precipitated a vital reaction.

On the administrative plane, the British set up a secular and equalitarian system. English penal and civil code, with ideas of individualism and natural rights, was introduced and the foundations were laid for the development of modern

legal, social and educational institutions. Communications were improved. Land was surveyed and revenue settlement made on relatively easy terms. Agriculture was encouraged. The feudal order of society eroded in the new setup. Increasing opportunities for trade and commerce and for government employment led to the emergence of a middle class which slowly gained social recognition and dominance. After an initial period of stringent repression, the Sikhs who had fought the British valiantly before surrendering to them were treated with a measure of liberality. This touched a responsive chord and they outgrew their sullenness to join the troops the English were raising. To their main occupation of agriculture they took with redoubled confidence. An era of peace and prosperity seemed in sight, promising renovation of cultural and intellectual *mores*.

Education became accessible to the common people as the public system of instruction was introduced. The Education Despatch of 1854 asking provincial administrations to set up agencies of public instruction led to the establishment of the Punjab Education Department in Lahore. Under its aegis primary and middle schools, mainly vernacular, and English-medium high schools were opened in villages and towns. This was the beginning of the end of the traditional system, generally backward and rudimentary, under which the Hindu children went to *Mahajan* schools to learn to read and write and cipher in the mercantile characters, Muslims to Quran schools in mosques and Sikhs to Gurmukhi schools in *gurdwaras*, the Sikh places of worship. The schools sponsored by the government were religiously neutral and were in this sense distinguished from the mission schools. From these government schools were coming out young men with some acquaintance with English language and literature and with minds opened to current knowledge and thought—most of them eager for, and in fact securing, civil appointments and a few, very few initially, contemplating the state of their own society in light of the new ideas they had imbibed and pledging themselves to its amelioration.

Engagement with the modern Indian languages was a feature of the cultural awakening which was making itself manifest. A welcome and constructive development was the formation on January 21, 1865, of the *Anjuman-i-Punjab* by the distinguished linguist Dr. William Gottlieb Leitner, who became successively the first Principal of the

Government College at Lahore and the first Registrar of the University of the Punjab. This society aimed at the development of vernacular literature and dissemination of popular knowledge through this medium. It held meetings for the discussion of questions of literary, scientific and social interests, sent memorials to the government, established a public library and compiled a number of treatises and translations in Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi. The Anjuman also started an oriental school and was instrumental in the establishment of the Punjab University College, which was assigned to "promoting the diffusion of European science, as far as possible, through the medium of the vernacular languages of the Punjab, improving and extending vernacular literature generally, affording encouragement to the enlightened study of the Eastern classical languages and literature, and associating the learned and influential classes of the Province with the officers of Government in the promotion and supervision of popular education." This college became a university in 1882. One of the arguments the Lieutenant-Governor had advanced in favour of the creation of a separate university for his province was "the creation of a more effective machinery than has heretofore existed for forming a vernacular literature imbued with the knowledge of the West, and creating a series of educational works in literature and science suitable for imparting that knowledge to the rising generation."<sup>9</sup>

The Government's interest in encouraging modern languages expressed itself in various ways. The state of Urdu poetry, for instance, was a matter of concern to it and the Director of Public Instruction founded, on a suggestion from the Lieutenant-Governor, a series of monthly *mushairas*, or poetical recitations. At the first meeting held by him on May 9, 1874, he said: "This meeting has been called to find ways and means for the development of Urdu poetry, which is in a state of decadence . . . Let us lay the foundation of a new *mushaira* today, with a special feature that instead of a hemistich we should announce a certain subject on which the poets should write poems . . . I propose that we should hold monthly meetings, and that next month the poets should write on the 'rainy season.'"<sup>10</sup>

The enthusiasm which had introduced a regenerative element into the Indian life turned out to be the cause of cultural division. Around these languages grew narrow and exclusive nationalism.

They became for the different communal groups the instruments and symbols of self-assertion. Hindus were attached to Hindi as the Muslims were to Urdu and the Sikhs to Punjabi. As time passed, these loyalties became firm and fanatical. The result was mutual acrimony and conflict which spilled over to the political sphere.

The controversy between Hindi and Urdu in the areas of Bihar and the U.P. had strengthened communal consciousness and reification. The order of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in 1872 replacing Urdu by Hindi, in the Devanagiri script, as the language of official business in the Patna and Bhagalpur divisions was met with resentment by the Muslims. Hindi was owned and supported by Hindus who formed Hindi Panch Sabhas to have its sphere further widened. A movement for the advancement of Urdu gained a strong foothold in the U.P. under the powerful leadership of Sir Sayyid Ahmad. A permanent association "to defend and advance the Urdu language" called *Anjuman-i-Taraqqi-i-Urdu* was formed, with T. W. Arnold, brother of the poet and critic Matthew Arnold and who had served as the first Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab, as president and Shibli Nomani, the Muslim historian, as secretary. A similar society, *Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Urdu*, had come into existence in the Punjab. Petitions and counter-petitions were made to the government and mutual warfare kept alive through newspaper columns. This linguistic patriotism was accentuated by the material consideration of the loaves and fishes of office the use of a language could bestow on either section.

After the abolition of Persian as the official language of India by Warren Hastings in 1837, Urdu had gained foothold in the lower courts and offices of administration. In the Punjab, conquering British administrators had adopted Urdu. It remained in this position of dominance and, through the years, became the language not only of administration but also of school instruction. Punjabi, which was the language of the people of the territory, whether Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs, was denied its natural place. Muslims neglected it because of their emotional fixation on Urdu and Hindus because of their involvement with Hindi. Punjabi was left to be acknowledged and supported by Sikhs alone. This repudiation of Punjabi by the majority of the population whose language it was and its exclusion from the

systems of education and administration in its native home created an imbalance in the cultural life of the Punjab and thwarted its literary growth. For the Sikhs the relegation of Punjabi was galling. Its installation in its rightful position became an article of faith with them and a condition of their own cultural autonomy and prosperity.

The challenge of Western science and Christian ethics and humanitarianism provoked self-examination and reinterpretation in Indian religions. The result was a wide movement of reformation which took pronouncedly sectarian forms in the *Arya Samaj* fundamentalism in Hinduism and *Ahmadiya* heresy in Islam. The more liberal expressions were the *Brahma Sabha*, later known as *Brahmo Samaj*, founded by Rammohun Roy in Bengal in 1828, *Prarthana Samaj*, which began in Bombay in 1867, and the teaching of Rama Krishna Paramahansa (1834-86). The encounter in the Punjab was marked by aggressiveness and acerbity and the last decades of the nineteenth century were filled with abrasive religious polemic in which Christians, Muslims and *Arya Samajists* freely participated.

For Sikhism, strangely somnolent since the forfeiture of political authority, this was a provocative situation. Impinged upon by the challenges that had arisen, it was set on a course of self-understanding. The formalism and ceremonial which had accumulated during the days of courtly power were recognized as accretions and adulterations contrary to the teachings of the Gurus. Survival was linked with the expunction of these abuses and the recovery of purity in belief and usage. Such had been the dereliction of the faith that, after occupation of the Punjab, several of the British observers prognosticated dismally for it. Some thought it was already dead; others that it awaited an inevitable doom.

A protest against the rot that had set in was registered in the time of the Sikh rule. Baba Dayal, a saintly man contemporary of Ranjit Singh, had cavilled at the shortcomings of the mighty and assailed the rites and observances which subverted the Sikh way of life. His main target was the worship of images, against which he preached vigorously. He reemphasized the Sikh belief in *Nirankar*—the Formless One. From this the movement he had started came to be known as the *Nirankari* movement.

For early Christian missionaries it was an interesting development. As a report says: "Some



time in the summer we heard of a movement among the Hindus of Rawalpindi, which, from the representations we received, seemed to indicate a state of mind favourable to the reception of Truth. It was deemed expedient to visit them, to ascertain the true nature of the movement, and, if possible, to give it a proper direction. On investigation, however, it was found that the whole movement was the result of the efforts of an individual to establish a new *pantb* (religious sect) of which he should be the instructor and guide. The sect has been in existence eight or nine years, but during the Sikh reign fear kept them quiet; since the extension of the Company's Government over the country, they have become more bold, and with the assistance of our religious publications to furnish them with arguments against idolatry, they have attacked the faith of the Hindus most fiercely. They professedly reject idolatry, and all reverence and respect for whatever is held sacred by Sikhs or Hindus, except Nanak and his Granth. The Hindus complain that they even give abuse to the cow. This climax of impiety could not be endured, and it was followed by some street disturbances, which brought the parties into the civil courts . . . They are called *Nirankaris*, from their belief in God, as a spirit without bodily form. The next great fundamental principle of their religion is, that salvation is to be obtained by meditation on God. They regard Nanak as their saviour, inasmuch as he taught them the way of salvation. Of their peculiar practices only two things are learned. First, they assemble every morning for worship, which consists of bowing the head to the ground before the Granth, making offerings, and in hearing the Granth read by one of their number, and explained also if their leader be present. Second, they do not burn their dead, because that would assimilate them to the Hindus; nor bury them, because that would make them too much like Christians and Musulmans, but throw them into the river."<sup>11</sup>

The *Nirankari* and the more actively protestant Namdhari movement which followed it had but limited impact. What touched Sikhism to its very roots and made it a living force once again was the Singh Sabha reformation. Unlike other Indian reform movements of the period which were the creation of outstanding individual leaders, the Singh Sabha was a mass upsurge. There were three factors mainly responsible for it—an awareness born of the general awakening in the atmosphere that Sikhism as commonly practised was a corruption of what it originally was, reaction to what was happening in the neighbouring religious traditions, and defensiveness generated by Christian proselytization.

Typical of the mood which gave birth to the *Singh Sabha* was the note which appeared in the *Khalsa Akhbar*, launched a few years later to serve the objects of the movement: "An English newspaper writes that the Christian faith is making rapid progress and makes the prophecy that within the next twenty-five years, one-third of the *Majha* area would be Christian. The *Malwa* will follow suit. Just as we do not see any Buddhists in the country except in images, in the same fashion the Sikhs, who are now, here and there, visible in their turbans and their other religious forms like wrist-bangles and swords, will be seen only in pictures in museums. Their own sons and grandsons turning Christians and clad in coats and trousers and sporting mushroom-like caps, will go to see them in the museums and say in their pidgin Punjabi, 'Look, that is the picture of a Sikh—the tribe that inhabited this country once upon a time.' Efforts of those who wish to resist the onslaught of Christianity are feeble and will prove abortive like a leper without hands and feet trying to save a boy falling off a rooftop."<sup>12</sup>

The rate of conversion to Christianity was, in actual fact, never high or alarming and the newspaper commentator's real point seems to lie in

Lo, a silent, profound man of God with  
a presence that inspires joy in life, love of  
God and goodness in man.

—Professor Puran Singh



his sarcasm about the Sikhs' weakening loyalty to the traditions of their faith. Yet there were instances which aroused the community's concern. In 1853 Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last Sikh ruler of the Punjab, who had come under British tutelage at the tender age of eight, accepted the Christian faith—a conversion hailed as “the first instance of the accession of a Christian prince to the communion of the Church.”<sup>13</sup> Duleep Singh made liberal donations out of his allowance for Christian charity and the maintenance of mission schools. The Sikh Raja of Kapurthala invited the Ludhiana Mission to set up a station in his capital and provided funds for its maintenance. “Until the Rajah of Kapurthala invited missionaries to his capital, no instance had occurred in India, in which the progress of the Gospel had been fostered by a ruler.”<sup>14</sup> A few years later, the Raja's nephew Kanwar Harnam Singh became a Christian. The Gospel was preached near the precincts of the Golden Temple. For this purpose one of the surrounding *Bungas*, or pilgrims' inns, had been acquired on rent.

In the beginning of 1873, four Sikh students of the Amritsar Mission School proclaimed their intention of renouncing their faith in favour of Christianity. This shocked Sikh feeling. Added to this was a series of carping lectures in Amritsar on the Sikh faith and the narration of Guru Nanak's life in deliberately garbled detail by Shardha Ram Phillauri, who had been engaged by the British to write a history of their faith. To consider these matters some prominent Sikhs, including Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, Baba Sir Khem Singh Bedi, a descendant of Guru Nanak, and Kanwar Bikram Singh of Kapurthala, convened a meeting in Amritsar in 1873. As a result of their deliberations, a society under the name of *Singh Sabha* was formed. Among other things, the *Sabha* undertook to (i) restore Sikhism to its pristine purity; (ii) edit and publish historical and religious books; (iii) propagate current knowledge, using Punjabi as the medium, and to start magazines and newspapers in Punjabi; (iv) reform and bring back into the Sikh fold those who had renounced the faith; and (v) interest the highly placed Englishmen in, and ensure their association with, the educational programme of the Sikhs.

The *Singh Sabha* gained quick support of the literate sections of the community and many

Sikh scholars and leaders volunteered to join its ranks. A vigorous campaign was set afoot. Two of its major thrusts were the depreciation of un-Sikh customs and social evils, and the encouragement of Western education. Progressive concern was as pronounced as the revivalist impulse. Supporters of the *Singh Sabha* initially met with strong opposition, especially in the villages. They were scorned and ridiculed for their so-called novel ideas. An epigrammatic couplet satirizing their new-fangled enthusiasm has become part of Punjabi folklore:

*When the barn is emptied of grain,  
What better can you do than turn a  
Singh Sabha?*

The reformist ideology was disseminated to the Sikh peasantry primarily through soldiers serving in the army or those who had retired. One of the regiments had constituted a choir of reciters to go round the villages and sing the sacred hymns at *Singh Sabha* congregations. The movement picked momentum and rocked the Punjab from one end to the other. Besides the religious and social reform, it brought fresh leaven to the intellectual and cultural life. In this period of fecundation, Punjabi literature made vigorous progress.

About the time *Singh Sabha* emerged into being, the *Namdhari*, or *Kuka*, movement which had preceded it came to a bloody climax. The *Kuka* reform had insisted on the abolition of caste and infanticide and the simplification of Sikh religious and social ceremonial. In its advocacy of the use of the *swadeshi*, which forestalled an important feature of the nationalist struggle under the inspiration of Gandhiji, were hidden its political overtones. English education, mill-made cloth and other imported goods were boycotted. Government service, law courts and the post offices established by the British were shunned. The movement was warily watched by the British, shaken by the uprising of 1857. In its zealous attachment to the cause of cow protection it eventually came into clash with the government. Many *Kukas* were arrested, including their pontiff Baba Ram Singh, who was deported to Burma and detained there under the Bengal Act of 1818, a provision which had been invoked to similarly exile Bahadur Shah, the last Mughal Emperor of Delhi, after the events of 1857. Sixty-five of the *Kukas* were

blown away at gunmouth in the Malerkotla parade-ground without the formality of a legal trial. This was in 1872.

Into this heaving, pulsating age was Bhai Vir Singh born on December 5, 1872.

As he grew up, he was profoundly influenced by the religious and cultural forces around him. The furtherance of the *Singh Sabha* enlightenment became the central motive of his life. In this task was enlisted the entire genius of his personality. This was his main inspiration and he lived and thought through the ardour of this involvement. His practical concerns were related to this aim and all of his moral and creative energy was directed towards its realization.

The prompting came from what was happening in the Punjab at that moment of rethinking, of self-discernment and of the turning of the spirit. This process of awakening deeply stirred his mind. He was attracted to its cause by the challenge it presented to a cultivated and poetic nature such as his and by the example of his family. His education at a mission school must have had something to do with it, too. The devotion of the missionaries to evangelizing and humanitarian works, the vast structure behind this undertaking, the personal courtesy and humility of the teachers, especially his successive principals Norman and McKenzie, and exposure to the liberal values of Western thought must have been factors in shaping his own response and ideas. Apparently, he reacted with some vehemence to instances of conversion of schoolboys such as Rullia Ram's about which he must have heard at school and Makkhan Singh Sodhi's which took place in Rev. Norman's own time. As is evident from his writings, nothing excited his sense of persiflage more than the sight of an anglicized or Christianized Indian.

It was a conscious decision on the part of Bhai Vir Singh to dedicate himself to serving the *Singh Sabha*. This became his fulltime occupation and the sole, monistic principle of his literary creation. His contribution towards moulding the cultural resource and ideological foundations of the movement was immensely significant. He understood correctly the inter-relationship between culture and language and realized that the people's tongue alone could be the vehicle of the kind of regeneration they were working for and that this was the only means to making such a process meaningful and widespread. For this

reason, one of his primary concerns was to invigorate and enrich the Punjabi language.

Bhai Vir Singh also perceived that historical consciousness was a precedent to cultural development. The resurrection of the past in handsome, glorified terms was a favoured theme with him. Bhai Vir Singh provided in this manner the key impulses of the Punjabi renaissance. In this sense, he stands in a subtle relationship to that whole period in the history of the Punjab. He is the product of the new awareness that was then arising, but his was the genius that gave it substance and direction. His literary production is essential to understanding that situation. It defines that period, its characteristic mood and content.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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<sup>3</sup> Sushil Kumar De, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, Calcutta, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962, p. 461.

<sup>4</sup> J. P. Naik, ed., *Selections from Educational Records of the Government of India*, National Archives of India, 1963, Vol. II, p. 27.

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<sup>6</sup> *Historical Sketches of the Indian Missions*, Allahabad, 1886, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Clark, *The Missions in the Punjab and Sindh*, London, Church Missionary Society, revised edition, 1904, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> J. Waskom Pickett, The Abingdon Press, Cincinnati, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> J. P. Naik, ed., *Selections from the Educational Records of the Government of India*, National Archives of India, 1963, Vol. II, p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> Translated from the *Kob-i-Nur*, June 16, 1874, as quoted in Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 290.

<sup>11</sup> *Annual Report of the Lodianna Mission*, Ludhiana, American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1853, pp. 22-23.

<sup>12</sup> The *Khalsa Akhbar*, Lahore, 1893, translated from the Punjabi.

<sup>13</sup> J. Johnston Walsh, *A Memorial of the Fattehgarh Mission*, p. 113.

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## About the Sikh Foundation .....

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**F**ounded in the year 1967, the SIKH FOUNDATION is a non-political and non-profit organization. The basic purpose of the SIKH FOUNDATION is to disseminate knowledge about the history, literature, art, culture and religion of the Sikhs. These objectives of the Foundation are undertaken by publication of books and journals, commissioning of artists, sponsoring of lectures and seminars, awarding fellowships to scholars, organizing religious functions, instituting awards and assisting in the establishment of literary, art, cultural and religious centers.

The Foundation is particularly proud in having the patronage of such eminent and dedicated Sikhs as H. H. YADAVINDRA SINGH, SARDAR H.S. MALIK AND SARDAR KIRPAL SINGH NARANG. The Board of Trustees manages the activities of the Foundation with the active assistance and advice of the Advisory Panel consisting of eminent Sikhs residing in various cosmopolitan cities in the U.S.A. and Canada. Furthermore, participation of Sikhs and Non-Sikhs is solicited in efficiently executing the various authorized projects of the Foundation.

Since its inception, the Sikh Foundation, in collaboration with local Sikh organizations, has hosted visits and sponsored lectures, TV, radio and newspaper interviews by numerous Sikh scholars viz: DR. GOPAL SINGH, PROF. GANDA SINGH, SARDAR H. S. MALIK, DR. GOBIND SINGH MANSUKHANI AND SARDAR PARKASH SINGH BADAL.

In the year 1969 the Sikh Foundation undertook with the assistance of the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society the publication of a 55 page 'QUINCENTENARY BULLETIN' covering the celebration of the fifth centennial of the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji in various parts of U.S.A. Nearly 2000 copies of this publication

have been distributed free of cost. In 1970 the Foundation announced the publication of a REGISTER OF SIKHS IN USA AND CANADA. This register consisting of approximately two thousand individuals residing in U.S.A. and Canada with a photograph of the head of the family has been published. Copies of this register are available and a second edition is planned in the year 1973-74.

In the year 1971, the Foundation announced its decision to publish a quarterly journal—THE SIKH SANSAR. The inaugural issue of the SIKH SANSAR was published in March 1972. The Editorial Board of the journal has enlisted some of the greatest scholars of Sikh culture on its editorial advisory board. Furthermore, the Sikh Foundation has announced the publication of a book entitled THE HISTORY AND RELIGION OF SIKHS by PROF. GANDA SINGH. This book is scheduled for printing during the years 1972-73.

During the past five years the Sikh Foundation has assisted various local Sikh communities on specific projects and has provided financial contributions to THE SIKH CULTURAL SOCIETY, New York, THE SIKH CULTURAL SOCIETY, Washington, THE SIKH TEMPLE, Yuba City, THE PACIFIC COAST KHALSA DIWAN SOCIETY, STOCKTON, and SIKH CENTER, San Francisco.

The Board of Trustees of the Foundation is at present embarked on developments of a five year plan and various exciting projects are under consideration. This five year plan is scheduled to be formulated by the end of 1972.

In its most ambitious and exciting hopes and plans of the Sikh Foundations, it earnestly solicits the advice, assistance and financial contributions of all Sikhs and sympathizers.

*N.S. Kapany, President*



# Book Review

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THE GRANTH OF GURU GOBIND SINGH  
AND THE KHALSA BROTHERHOOD  
by Reverend Clinton H. Loehlin, California.

Published by Lucknow Publishing House, Lucknow, India.  
Pages Demy Octavo vi 124 Cl. Bd. 1971  
Price \$2.00; £0.75; Rs. 8.00

Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the ten Sikh prophets, represents a unique phenomenon in the religious history of mankind. With his deeply spiritual vision he combined heroic courage and action. By raising a protest against political tyranny and religious intolerance and devising vigorous means to resist these, he aroused a strong spirit of patriotism and nationalism. Guru Gobind Singh created a new race of Saint-Soldiers which is famous for its exemplary dignity and self-sacrifice.

Guru Gobind Singh acquired wide knowledge of Sanskrit and Persian lore. He was a patron of literature and learning. He kept 52 scholars in his employ who created a vast treasure of Hindi and Punjabi literature by making translations from Sanskrit. He himself was a poet of great power and versatility. Rarely has poetry aroused greater zeal and vigor, or inspired such a spirit of courage and martyrdom. His compositions were compiled by Bhai Mani Singh after the Guru's death in 1708. Controversies have often raged around the authenticity and veracity of these compositions and their interpretations.

Guru's description of the divine attributes in *Jap Sahib* is remarkable. The autobiographical *Vachitar Natak* (The Wondrous Drama), *Akal Ustat* and *Chandi-di-Var* are some of Guru Gobind Singh's other well known compositions. *Zafarnama*, the Persian Epistle of Victory—epitome of his buoyant optimism—addressed to King Aurangzeb, is a masterpiece in Persian poetry. He wrote letters to his sons: Prince Shah Azim Shah, and Prince Kam Baksh, in most pathetic words invoking pity of the Lord and His mercy to re-

trieve his soul from the abysmal depth of hell where it seemed to have fallen for his sins.

In this book Dr. Loehlin after giving a brief life-sketch of the great Guru, describes the contents of the *Dasam Granth*, its character, form and language, and its purpose. The author has admirably treated each composition separately, analysing different versions and the meaning given to them by Sikh and non-Sikh interpreters.

The author's comparative study of the *Adi Granth* and the *Dasam Granth* is very informative. The Guru's *Hukamnamas* reveal religious, political, social, literary, and economic conditions of that period. The author tries to prove that the spirit of the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Vachitar Natak* is very similar. In the chapter on "The Guru and Islam", Dr. Loehlin has established beyond doubt that the Guru was never against Islam nor against Muslims but was against tyranny and religious persecution.

The author pleads for more historical research on the development of the Khalsa and on the textual authenticity of the Sikh Scriptures. A few appendices at the end add to the usefulness of the book. The printing and overall arrangement and appearance are good.

Dr. Loehlin lived for forty years in the Punjab and acquired close and thorough knowledge of Sikhism by personal study. His first book *THE SIKHS AND THEIR SCRIPTURES* has run into three editions. His present work places him in the position of a Western student of the *Adi Granth* and *Dasam Granth*. In the course of his missionary work he was attracted to the sturdy cultivators and made many Sikh friends in the various towns and cities where he served in the central Punjab. He found Sikh theology, in its essence, very congenial to Christian theology, with its emphasis on salvation by the grace of God, to be expressed in service to mankind, all for the glory of the Almighty God.

Ajaib Singh Sidhu

## BOOK REVIEW

continued—

### BEYOND NO ONE'S REACH

by Dr. K. T. Lalvani

Guru Nanak Foundation (U.K.), London, E.1. 1969.

56 pages; price not quoted.

This book is one more effort, among the several attempts, directed toward helping the modern man to benefit from the wisdom of both East and West. The source of wisdom, in this case, is Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh Faith. It was Nanak who preached and practiced the love of God and the love of Man. With the Guru the oneness of God and the oneness of Man were synonymous.

In a lucid, essay-like style, the author has discussed such perennial questions as peace of mind, the soul, love, ethics, the purpose of human life, karma, reincarnation, God, universe, meditation, and life after death. A scientist by profession, he blends the two oft-warring disciplines—science and religion.

The small size of the book has made it necessary to compress a great deal of thought into a little space. This is the way it should have been. Let the seeker climb the sublime altitudes and experience for himself, or herself, the sought-after joys.

Although the title of the book—*Beyond NO One's Reach*—is tempting, it will require a great deal of effort to reach the summit. Perhaps, the most gratifying aspect of this publication is its relevance to our times. A seeker does not mind the effort. The resentment is over not going anywhere.

Again, perhaps, the modern man has been prone to look at his ever-lengthening shadow. All he needs is turning around, and seeing the light presented in this book. I am confident his effort will be rewarded.

*Hari Singh Everest*

We regret  
that due to shortage  
of space in this  
special issue featuring  
Bhai Vir Singh  
it was not possible  
to include the  
LOCAL NEWS column,  
nor LETTERS TO  
THE EDITOR.  
We invite you  
to submit material  
for these columns  
in future issues  
of The Sikh Sansar.

*The Editor*

## Call to all local Sikh organizations in U.S.A. and Canada

Please note that the September 1972 issue of the SIKH SANSAR will feature "Sikhs in U.S.A. and Canada". You are earnestly requested to fill this form, or the one on the next page, whichever is pertinent—and mail at your earliest convenience. This will ensure that your local Sikh organization is appropriately covered in the September issue. Address: Editor, SIKH SANSAR, Box 727, Redwood City, California 94064.

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## WITHIN ME

The moon shines in my body, but my blind eyes  
cannot see it:  
The moon is within me, and so is the sun.  
The unstruck drum of Eternity is sounded  
within me; but my deaf ears cannot hear it.  
So long as man clamours for the *I* and the *Mine*,  
his works are as naught:  
When all love of the *I* and the *Mine* is dead, then  
then the work of the Lord is done.  
For work has no other aim than the getting of  
knowledge:  
When that comes, then work is put away.

*Kabir*

## MY BODY

The shadows of evening fall thick and deep, and  
the darkness of love envelops the body and  
the mind.  
Open the window to the west, and be lost in the  
sky of love;  
Drink the sweet honey that steepes the petals of  
the lotus of thy heart.  
Receive the waves in your body: what splendour  
is in the region of the sea!  
Hark! the sounds of conches and bells are rising.  
Kabir says: 'O brother, behold! the Lord is in  
this vessel of my body.'

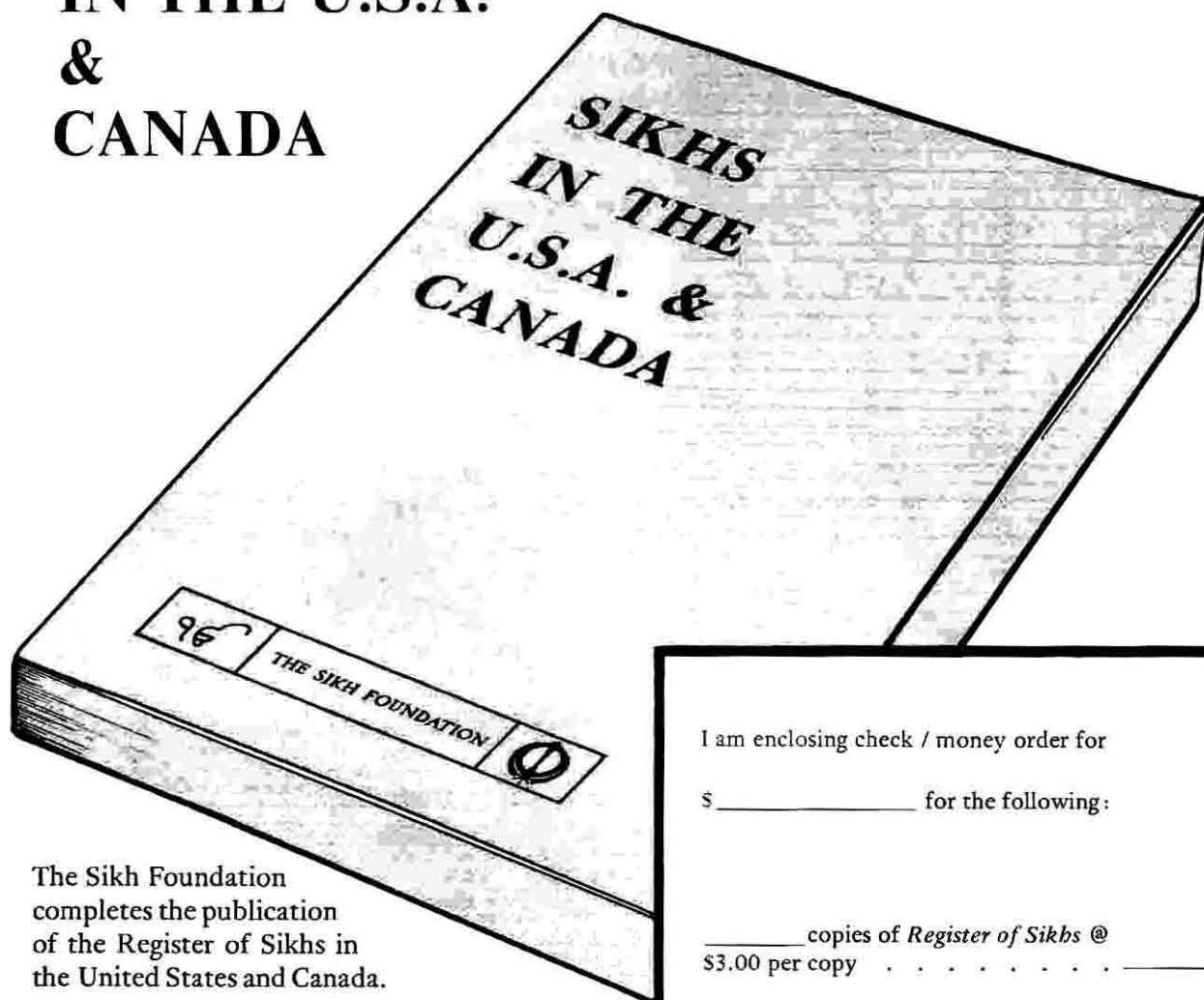
*Kabir*



A piece of charcoal,  
I washed it with milk and soap in the hope  
that its black might turn white,  
but no,  
til it burned in fire, it did not glow.

*Bhai Vir Singh*  
*English rendering by*  
*Dr. S. Radhakrishnan,*  
*President of India*

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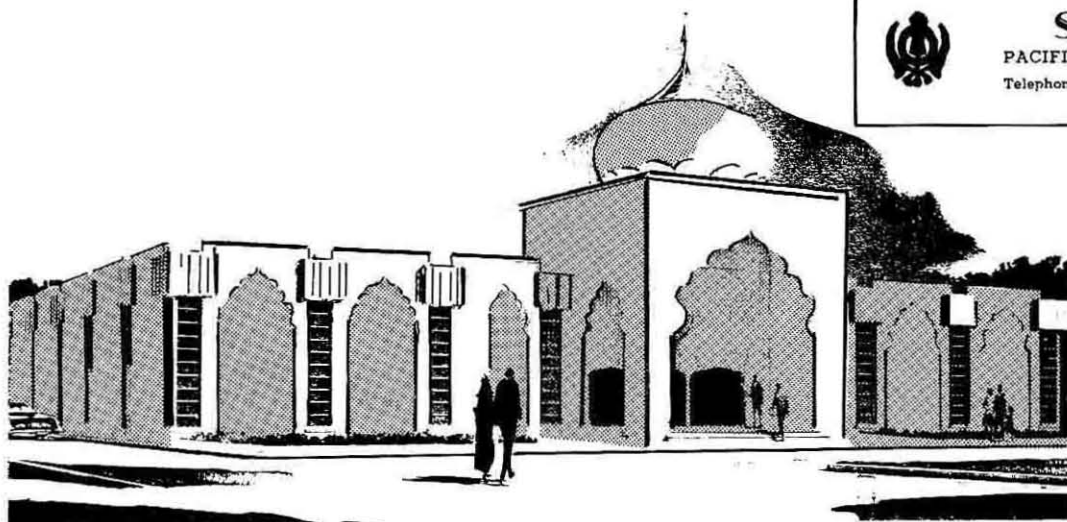
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2. The material should be typewritten, double-spaced, preferably on 8½" x 11" paper.
3. The article should be about four to ten typewritten pages. In exceptional circumstances longer articles which could be serialized to appear in consecutive issues would be considered.
4. All articles must contain an abstract which describes in encapsulated form the contents of the article.
5. References to material on which the contents of the article are based should be included to enable the reader to locate this material if he so desires. The authors should take special care to see that as many pertinent publications as possible are referenced.
6. If a photograph is to be included in the manuscript, two black and white glossy prints of high contrast and clarity must be supplied.
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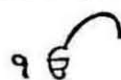


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